

COURSE: ADVANCED COMPOSITION

45 clock hours

2 weekly meetings – 1 ½ hours each

OBJECTIVES

Students are expected to:

- Understand better the nature of writing.
- Acquire control strategies for the processes involved in writing.
- Develop writing skills that reflect the types of texts they are required to write in their university studies and in the world of work.
- Improve their writing skills in Spanish
- Increase their knowledge of Latin American culture

CONTENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Unit 1: Introduction of the instructor and the course. Preliminary chapter: How are speech and writing different? Organization and expression techniques. Writing and revising preliminary versions.

Unit 2: Description

Generating and collecting ideas. Organization and expression techniques. Writing and revising preliminary versions. Revising form and preparing the final version. Grammatical items: uses of *ser* and *estar*. Review and practice. Test 1: Writing a description

Unit 3: Narrative

The parts of a narrative text. Point of view and perspective. Description in narrative. Purpose. Generating and collecting ideas. Organization and expression techniques. Point of view and tone. Writing and revising preliminary versions. Revising form and preparing the final version. Grammatical items: past tenses. Activities and review. Test 2: Writing a narrative.

Unit 4 Expository writing (Part 1) Analysis and classification. Generating and collecting ideas. Organization and expression techniques. The revision plan. The checklist technique. Revising form and preparing the final version. Grammatical items: passive voice.

Unit 5 Expository writing (Part 2) Comparison & contrast and cause & effect. Generating and collecting ideas. Organization and expression techniques. The writing plan. Revising form and preparing the final version. Grammatical items: uses of the subjunctive. Test 3: Writing an expository text.

Unit 6: Argumentative writing (Part 1) Approximations. How to establish a believable “voice”. The writing plan. Revising form and preparing the final version. Grammatical items: relative pronouns. Activities and review.

Unit 7: Argumentative writing (Part 2) Argumentation in a literary work. Generating and collecting ideas. Organization and expression techniques. The writing plan. Revising form and preparing the final version. Grammatical items: non-personal forms of the verb. Test 4: Writing an argumentative text.

Review of course topics. General review for final exam. Model exercises.

Final exam

METHODOLOGY

Two ninety-minute classes will be taught per week. These combine theory and practice and demand active student participation. Without neglecting the communicative character of teaching and learning a foreign language, the course will have a sociocognitive approach. Students will see writing not only as a product but also as a process and will understand writing as a problem to solve and as a knowledge-construction activity – as it is considered by the current paradigms. Attention will be paid to the stages involved in text production. Emphasis will be put on the processes of planning, revising and re-writing; therefore, a great deal of time will be devoted to pre-writing and writing activities. Four models of text types will be practiced: description, narrative, expository texts and argumentative texts. The instructor will provide support and guidance throughout the process. Students will use authentic material in class. They will analyze and produce texts by trying to develop the notion of writing as an interaction between writer/reader/purpose/message. As part of a Language Program, the course aims at the development of the four main competences:

- (1) **Linguistic competence in Spanish** (which includes the knowledge of phonetics and phonology, morphosyntax and, lexis, discourse, etc.)

- (2) **Communicative/interactional competence** (communicative skills in Spanish that include the knowledge of the sociocultural uses of language, pragmatics and cultural perspectives and background)
- (3) **Metalinguistic competence** (awareness of language as an abstract, conceptual and symbolic system)
- (4) **Metacognitive competence** (awareness of one's own mental processes)

HOMEWORK

Because of the main course objective, homework is essential. It will serve as preparation for the four term tests. Students will use a *Practice Handout* in which they will find activities for the two first steps in text production. They will have to think about a topic to write about, generate ideas, organize them and plan the details of the homework in each unit. On some occasions, they will also have to complete more controlled exercises related to the content and organization of each text type and activities focusing on the Spanish language (grammar, lexis) and its expression (rhetorical techniques). Although some drafts will be written in class, others will have to be written at home. After each draft has been revised by the instructor or a classmate (peer-revision is encouraged and taught during the course), students will have to evaluate the suggestions and make all relevant corrections before writing the final version of each text.

EVALUATION

Formal evaluation will be restricted to the requirements and guidelines already established by the *Programa de Español y Cultura Latinoamericana*. Students will be given a diagnostic test at the beginning of the course and formative and summative tests throughout and at the end of the course. (Four term tests and a final exam are suggested. Each term test consists in writing a different text type of around 280/300 words. A list of topics will be presented in class so that students can think about them at home and write their compositions on the day of the test).

BIBLIOGRAPHY (for students)

Valdés et al. 2004. *Composición. Proceso y Síntesis*. New York: Mac Graw Hill.